

## Star Wars

### Wizard's RPG Stories

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#### Smuggler's Trade

By Morrie Mullins

Former Living Force Plot Director and Campaign Designer

Kodo Arr, a recent arrival to Cularin, regales cantina-goers with stories of his training on Nar Shaddaa. Kodo - the self-proclaimed "best smuggler in the galaxy" - has a lot to say, and some of it might even be true. Check it out in our latest supplement to the Living Force campaign!

The cantina is one of dozens of nameless establishments on Tolea Biqua whose front is an unspectacular but immediately recognizable, pre-constructed facade of the same design as every other dive Riboga set up to anonymously run whatever he wanted to run. It's filled with a purplish haze that hovers near the floor, wafting up almost into your line of sight when fast-moving feet disrupt it. It scarcely moves at all for the slow tread of drunken feet much more common this night. Music pumps in the background, a recording of a Bith band whose private studio just off Coruscant burned last year in a "freak accident." Authorities might investigate, if not for a pesky war diverting their attention. The music, like the haze, is strange - - muted - - as if something more important is going on and your senses have been dulled to everything but that one, more important event.

Scanning the cantina, your eyes pass over the stray individual seated at a table or leaning against the bar in a tipsy demonstration of inertia. Eventually, an outside force will act on them, and they will move. But not until then.

A few moments pass as you adjust to the ambiance. Just below the throb-wail of the music, you begin to hear a murmur. Voices trickle up to you, hiding in the haze that creeps and swirls along the floor, emanating from a table in the darkened back corner of the cantina. This is what has the music so low, the haze so thick and sharp smelling, and the patrons so stoic. This is the Something More Important, and it seems only natural to wander over for a look. As you do, a Trandoshan - - his face bright red from the alcohol and his eyes as wide as a child's - - turns and staggers away from the table. He leaves an opening just large enough for you to slide into before the small crowd gathered around the table closes up once more.

There, on the far side of the table, sits a Human male of middle years. He sports close-cropped white hair and a growth of pale stubble that might be the beginnings of a beard. Even in the low light of the cantina, you can see his eyes with perfect clarity. Enormous pupils glance up at you from the center of irises of such a pale blue as to appear almost white. He nods, almost in your direction, almost seeming to recognize your presence, then takes a sip of his ale and seems to continue where he left off. "Nar Shaddaa.

Like I said, it's a place like nothing you ever did see..."

Nar Shaddaa. Like I said, it's a place like nothing you ever did see. Don't get me wrong. I've seen bigger and I've seen meaner, but it's Hutt space about as true as you can get. Stuck up there right over Nal Hutta, locked in orbit, spires and platforms everywhere. I spent way more time there than I ever wanted to, that's a sure enough thing. But every minute you live there is one minute you're not dying there, and that's a trick.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not about to sit here blowing sand up your nose and tell you it's spice. That's not the way I work. I mean, I'm Kodo Arr, best smuggler in the galaxy, and there were times when I thought, "Kodo, there's no way you're making it off this pile of rock. You're gonna die here just like every other bantha-brain who thought he could come in, trick the Hutts, and come out ahead."

This one time -- no lie -- I was making a moonside run. That's what we call it when we're just moving goods from one part of Nar Shaddaa to another, and let me tell you, even that's nothing to sneeze at. There's patrols everywhere. See, you hear all these stories about Nar Shaddaa being lawless and dangerous, and that's because it is. There's no "law" like what I hear you got in Cularin. You got your peace and security folks, and your militia folks. You know what Hutts have? Bounty hunters. Bounty hunters and bruisers. And if you think Hutts don't patrol what's theirs, you must have dipped into the happy jar one too many times. You don't get power in the galaxy without being willing to break some rules, but you don't keep power in the galaxy without being willing to make some rules. I guess you can call them "laws," if you want, but nobody writes down Hutt laws. You either know 'em and follow 'em or you don't and end up dead. Unless you're like me. Because there's not supposed to be unauthorized moonside runs, but here I was, making one, moving a shipment of delicates and fragiles from one vendor to another.

So I'm cruising along in my T-16 -- you can laugh, but you take one of those critters and pump a hundred large in credits into it, and it can do some amazing stuff while still looking like junk. Don't get me wrong. You folks who are still puttering around in the factory version are doing fine by yourselves, but sometimes, a man needs a little more.

I've got the delicates and fragiles in this bin that I'm dragging behind. Because, like we all know, you don't put the delicates and fragiles inside your ship. They cause all kinds of trouble, make messes, stink up the place -- you know how it goes. Plus, when you're pulling an unauthorized load, you need to know that you can cut it free if you want and let it head for the dirt level on its own. There's worse things than losing a cargo, and most of them involve getting caught by the Hutts running product without a license.

Anyway, I'm cruising along, trying to keep from ducking too low between the buildings. The thing nobody tells you about Nar Shaddaa -- and mark my words on this, 'cause I got no reason to lie -- is that once you get about a half-kilometer below the peaks of the spires, nobody knows how to drive. It's not even incompetence, I don't think, because to be incompetent you have to have some idea of what you're trying to do, and most of the people that fly around Nar Shaddaa, they got less than no idea what they're doing. You watch them try to fly, and they sit there with a hand on the yoke and a hand on their comlink, yapping away, not paying a bit of attention to anything around

them. Then they're running into somebody else, and both speeders are falling right out of the sky, two big balls of fire that take out another three or four speeders on their way down.

This is an easy run I'm on, though. I figure, I take the delicates and fragiles to the right warehouse and they validate my datapad. I get paid, everybody's happy, and so far things are going off without a hitch.

See, that's the kind of thought you should never have. Because nothing ever goes off without a hitch. No sooner do I say that than I hear something start to creak toward the back of my speeder. It's not a creaking I know, either. It's a bad creaking, like something's about to fall off. I plug R5 into the controls and tell him, "Don't let my speeder hit anything it's not supposed to." R5 beeps back at me -- because he's a droid, see, and can't talk -- and starts to steer while I head for the back to see what's going on.

If you ever been in a T-16, you know they're not the sturdiest things flying. Even with all my special modifications, it's still got weaknesses, and one of the biggest is the superstructure at the rear. Apparently -- and if you ask me, this is something they need to put in the owner's manual -- if you attach a huge metal box that's bigger than the speeder to the back of the speeder and then pull it through a dirty, nasty atmosphere, you get pretty major drag. And if you get enough drag, you can start pulling the back of your ship off. Which about defines "not good."

I get back there, see metal bending, rivets popping, and I shout up to R5, I shout, "Kill the engines and put up the rear shields!" Thinking I was actually in a ship that had rear shields just about got me killed, too. See, the speeder's got brakes, but the big metal box that's floating behind the speeder doesn't.

I don't mind telling you, that had me nervous for a couple seconds, when I figured out that we didn't have shields and we did have a few tons of fragile-and-delicate-filled metal coming at us. Then I remembered that one of the things I was carrying was some leftover droideka parts, and they were down in my hold. So I jumped down there, whipped out that box, attached those big droids' shield generators to the rear wall of my ship, wired them into the main power grid, boosted them with a few quick adjustments, and turned them on -- about two seconds before I hear a thump on the far side of the wall.

Oh, don't believe me? I don't care.

Lesson? I don't guess there is a lesson. That's just one of the tricks I learned on Nar Shaddaa. I got a trillion of 'em, too. Every day, it's something different, and there's always smugglers to learn from. Too bad nobody there's gonna be learning from the best any time soon. Because he's right here.

So, who's buying me the next round?